

This legislation, Mr. Speaker, sponsored by the gentlewoman from California, the Honorable MAXINE WATERS, will formally reauthorize the program.

H.R. 908 authorizes the Attorney General to award competitive grants to nonprofit organizations for planning, establishing, and operating locally-based programs to protect and locate missing persons with Alzheimer's disease, dementia, or other problems.

This is an excellent measure that responds to a critical problem, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time that I may consume.

I'm pleased to support H.R. 908, the Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert Program Reauthorization of 2009.

Roughly 5 million Americans suffer from Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Of these, 60 percent will become lost from their families or their caretakers. If they're not found within 24 hours, up to half of them become seriously ill or even die.

H.R. 908 increases the chance of locating missing persons suffering from these diseases within the critical first 24 hours. Specifically, the bill provides grants to nonprofit organizations to help create and maintain programs to assist in locating missing patients and family members with Alzheimer's.

We passed similar legislation in the last session of Congress, sent it to the Senate, and the Senate made a few changes and sent it back to us for our approval here in the House, but we did not have enough to consider the bill before Congress adjourned at the end of last year. H.R. 908 contains compromise language from the Senate version of the last session of Congress.

These programs and organizations this legislation aims to help are often significantly useful to local law enforcement when a person suffering from these mind-altering diseases goes missing. Because these patients are often disoriented and confused, tips and information from family, friends, and doctors are very critical.

H.R. 908 provides support to these organizations, indirect assistance to local law enforcement, protection to patients, and some peace of mind to the families and loved ones.

I urge all my colleagues to support this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as she may consume to the gentlelady from California, the great Maxine Waters.

Ms. WATERS. I thank the gentleman for yielding time to me and for his very warm compliments. Thank you.

Approximately 5 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease, and the majority of them live at home under the care of family and friends. It is estimated that 60 percent of Alzheimer's patients are likely to wander away from their homes. Wanderers are vulnerable to dehydration, weather condi-

tions, traffic hazards, and individuals who prey on those who are defenseless. Up to 50 percent of wandering Alzheimer's patients will become seriously injured or die if they are not found within 24 hours of their departure from home.

The Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert Program is a Department of Justice program that helps local communities and law enforcement officials quickly identify persons with Alzheimer's disease who wander or who are missing and reunite them with their families.

Since its inception more than 10 years ago, this program has funded a national registry of more than 172,000 individuals at risk of wandering and has reunited over 12,000 wanderers with their families. It is a highly successful program whereby 88 percent of registrants who wander are found within the first 4 hours of being reported missing. A total of 1,288 wandering incidents were reported to the program in 2007. The program has a 98 percent success rate in recovering enrollees who are reported missing.

There are also technology-based options to address wandering that should be considered for funding under the Missing Alzheimer's Patient Program. For example, personalized wristbands that emit a tracking signal can be used to locate wanderers. These wristbands, when combined with specially trained search-and-rescue teams, can reduce search times from hours and days to minutes.

Congress originally authorized \$900,000 in appropriations for the Missing Alzheimer's Patient Program for 3 years, that is, 1996 through 1998, but never reauthorized or updated the program. Since then, the program has continued to receive funding on a year-to-year basis, but funding has remained virtually flat since its inception.

H.R. 908 reauthorizes, updates and expands the Missing Alzheimer's Patient Program.

The bill authorizes up to \$5 million per year in appropriations for fiscal years 2010 through 2016, a modest increase over the \$1 million appropriation in fiscal year 2008.

The bill expands the program so as to allow the Department of Justice to award multiple competitive grants to nonprofit organizations. Preference will be given to national nonprofit organizations that have a direct link to patients, and families of patients, with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

And finally, the bill specifies that the program will be operated under the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance. Currently, the program is operated under the Office of Juvenile Justice, which is obviously not the most appropriate agency for a program serving the mostly elderly.

H.R. 908 has 21 bipartisan cosponsors, including the co-chairs of the Congressional Alzheimer's Task Force, Congressman EDWARD MARKEY and Con-

gressman CHRISTOPHER SMITH. The bill has been endorsed by more than 85 national, State, and local organizations, including the Alzheimer's Association and the Alzheimer's Foundation of America.

The Missing Alzheimer's Patient Program is a critical resource for first responders. It saves local law enforcement officials valuable time and allows them to focus on other national and local security concerns. It is critical that we reauthorize and expand this small, but very effective, program.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 908.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentlelady from Oklahoma (Ms. FALLIN).

Ms. FALLIN. Mr. Speaker, we have an opportunity today to take a very important step in protecting some of our most vulnerable elderly citizens who suffer from Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

One American in 10 over the age of 65 suffers from Alzheimer's disease. For those over 85, it is one in two. Alzheimer's patients now number as many as 4.5 million in the United States, and as we baby boomers continue to age, those numbers will only continue to grow.

One of the great dangers for Alzheimer's patients is the tendency to become disoriented and to wander away from home. In fact, some 60 percent of those with Alzheimer's will do so at some point, and half of them will be seriously injured or even possibly die.

We've all heard stories in our local news networks, in our local communities: an elderly person goes missing, perhaps just going on a simple trip to the grocery store. Local search efforts are launched, and there are some great programs around our Nation to have those search efforts. The family will post notices somewhere and pleas for help for that missing person goes out. And the media certainly can help sound the alarm.

But sometimes these stories don't end happily and sometimes they do. The person that has wandered beyond the reach of local search efforts can be in serious trouble. If the weather is bad, or if that person should run across some dangerous individual, and they cross that Alzheimer's patient's path, it can end in tragedy.

In the fall of 2007, a member of my church, a lady named Betty Ledgerwood, left home one day and got into her car, had gas in her car, and ended up driving, not knowing where she was, who she was, and actually was missing for almost a full day. And her family even called me here, frantically trying to get some help with the media to find her. Her family did do all they could to sound the alarm.

Local officials searched for her, but she was eventually found, and she had died from exposure to the weather, just right outside her car, not in my home State of Oklahoma, but actually clear in Missouri. And she didn't know where